

EMILE ZOLA, NOVELIST AND
REFORMER 277

Oscar Wilde, when the latter was convicted of unnatural offences. Sir Edward opened the proceedings at no great length. He first pointed out that, in the case of "The Queen v. Hicklin," Lord Chief Justice Cockburn had ruled that the object for which a publication might be issued had nothing to do with the question of its obscenity, the test of which was whether the matter so published had a tendency to deprave and corrupt those into whose hands the publication might fall. He also mentioned that it had been ruled in the Hicklin case that no excuse was supplied by the circumstance that other literature — especially that of two or three centuries previously — might contain passages conflicting with one's judgment as to what was fit for circulation. Then he passed to "The Soil," asserting that it was full of bestial obscenity, without a spark of literary genius or the expression of an elevated thought. That, of course, was his opinion of the book; and several years later he amused a great many people by giving his opinions on literature at large, thereby arousing the ire of a distinguished writer, Mr. Edmund Gosse, who unfortunately made the mistake of telling Sir Edward Clarke that he was a lawyer and not a *litterateur* — even as Mr. Chamberlain in his fis-

cal campaign subsequently reproached Mr. Asquith for discussing business when he was not a business man. But whatever might be Sir Edward Clarke's calling, he had a right to hold opinions on literature and to express them. Even a tinker may have literary views and may make them known, though it does not follow that they will be adopted by the community generally.

Having concluded his address, the Solicitor-general proceeded to read some passages from "The Soil," and he had